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ABSTRACT

The transformation of a single-sex college into a coeducational college can be extremely costly. However, a cooperative arrangement among colleges, such as the one described in this paper, can sexually integrate single-sex colleges at very little extra cost. The Five Colleges Cooperation consists of 1 male college, Amherst; 2 female institutions, Smith and Mount Holyoke; a new coeducational undergraduate college, Hampshire College; and a large state university, the University of Massachusetts. In this cooperative agreement, any student at any one of the colleges may elect to enroll in any course at any other of the colleges, so long as that course is not offered at his or her own institution. The possibility of establishing student centers for students at all of the colleges has also been discussed, as well as joint extra-curricular organizations and social clubs. This arrangement, which would cost the colleges approximately $10 million if undertaken separately, can be achieved for about $200,000 a year in a cooperative arrangement. (HS)

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COOPERATION AND/OR COEDUCATION

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Men's and Women's College Conference

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You have already heard eloquent arguments for and against coeducation. I will not enter into that fray except to suggest that one of the strengths of the American system of higher education lies in its diversity. We have large institutions and small ones; public and private; men's colleges, women's colleges, coeducational colleges; junior colleges; four-year colleges, and graduate schools. Each is making a contribution to our country and it seems to me that there is value in retraining as wide a choice of opportunities for young people seeking an education as we can provide. As long as we have students who want to go to single-sex colleges, I hope opportunities for them will continue to exist. In this context, I would argue for the retention of some single sex colleges in the country. Whether any one of them can continue to be viable or not depends upon a number of circumstances I need not detail for this audience.

Before outlining the thoughts I have about the possible contribution cooperative arrangements among colleges may make to help resolve the problems of the single sex colleges considering coeducation, it seems to me I should describe briefly my vantage point. Every cooperative arrangement in the country is different from every other. Few generalizations apply to all. Under the circumstances it seems to me I should indicate the nature of my group.

The Five Colleges consist of one male institution, Amherst College; two female institutions, Smith and Mount Holyoke Colleges; a new coeducational undergraduate college, Hampshire College, which will admit its first students this Fall; and a large and rapidly growing state university, the University of Massachusetts. All five institutions are located in a triangle, the longest

side of which is eleven miles. A student with a car can get from any one institution to any other institution in twenty minutes---if the weather is good, if the traffic is light, and if the police are not lurking. These institutions have had cooperative arrangements for many years. They have had a formal Coordinator since 1957. Thus these five institutions have relative geographic proximity and a tradition of cooperation, both of which significantly affect the kinds of things they do now and can aspire to in the future.

The cooperative arrangements among the five colleges were begun to help each institution to more efficiently use its scarce resources for the better education of its students. Helping the single sex colleges to partake of the presumed joys of coeducation was not an objective. Even today, there is no explicit recognition that the cooperative machinery should be used to give women access to men or vice-versa. The student interchange regulations, for example, permit a student to take a course at another institution only if the course is not available to him on his own campus.

Nevertheless, a side effect of the cooperative arrangements has certainly been modification of the single sexness of Amherst, Smith, and Mount Holyoke. In fact, admissions officers at the three institutions can with honesty say that although they are single sex colleges students do have more access to members of the opposite sex in classes than is usually true of such institutions. The question is, should the cooperative arrangement be expanded explicitly to further those opportunities? No decision has yet been made.

My role as Five College Coordinator is not to attempt to direct any one institution in any particular way. It is rather to try to understand what the several institutions wish to do and to see where cooperation might help them do

it better working together rather than alone. Whether Amherst, Smith or Mount Holyoke decide to go coeducational is not my business. It is my business, however, to suggest ways in which cooperation might help them achieve whatever goals they set themselves.

While the institutions must themselves establish their goals, the existance or absence of cooperation possibilities should certainly be taken into consideration in determining the feasibility of reaching goals established. The three single sex colleges with which I deal have been able to be relatively leisurely in their consideration of the pressures toward coeducation because of student exchange possibilities which exist among the five colleges. It may be that the existance of the cooperative arrangements would make feasible the continuance of one, two or possibly all three single sex colleges in my group---a possibility which might not be open to them if they were isolated. Or, if one or more of the three decide to "go coeducational" it may be that the cooperative arrangement will help it do so. I think Mr. Briber will be discussing ways in which cooperation has helped several institutions in his group overcome some of the problems encountered in carrying out a decision to become coeducational.

I propose to address myself primarily to the ways in which cooperative arrangements may enable single sex colleges to continue to make in the future the sorts of contributions to higher education they have made in the past while obtaining some of the presumed advantages of coeducation.

It may be useful to try to isolate some of the "elements" of coeducation. In the first place, I think we should recognize that none of the institutions

here represented are completely single sex. That is, the students in all have some access to members of the opposite sex. I rather like the formulation given by Mr. Warren Gould, the President of the American Alumni Council, in a memorandum to the participants in this program. He talks about predominantly men's and predominantly women's colleges. There is a broad spectrum of possibilities here. Wheaton College, I suppose, is less coeducational than is Mount Holyoke College in that the women at Wheaton have access to fewer men in classes than do the women at Mount Holyoke. The reason is that Mount Holyoke College students attend classes at Amherst and at the University where there are many men, and men from Amherst and the University attend classes at Mount Holyoke. Radcliffe, to go even further, is for all practical purposes, coeducational.

In a sense, Mount Holyoke, Smith and Amherst are all coeducational right now as far as academic programs are concerned. The question is are they sufficiently coeducational to satisfy the desires expressed by their students and faculty? If not, what elements of coeducation are particularly important to each of them and how much of the scarce resources available to them are they prepared to put into obtaining those elements.

At present, among my group, a student from any one institution may take a course at any other institution---under certain conditions. To facilitate this we put approximately $50,000 a year into a bus system connecting all five colleges. During the present academic year some 1800 semester courses are being taken by students within the five colleges at institutions other than their own. But so far, I doubt that more than 5% of our total student population is taking a course at another campus.

Now, if men in women's classes, and women in men's classes is the essential element in coeducation, we could put more money into the bus system to move the students around faster and we could change the rules governing the taking of interchange courses to encourage Mount Holyoke girls to take courses at the University, let us say, and vice-versa.

If it is more social contact with members of the opposite sex that the single colleges want, it ought to be possible working together to set up joint five college student centers, and extra curricular organizations and events, possibly even to encourage the establishment of student hang-outs of one sort or another, beer halls or whatever students go for these days. It ought to be possible to encourage joint meetings of various student social clubs and so on.

If it is important that boys and girls have midnight snacks together and other relaxed informal contacts in order to really achieve the values of coeducation then we get into the question of residential exchanges. At present, the three single sex colleges in the valley are members of what is known as the Twelve College Group which exchanges students for residential purposes under varying rules among twelve institutions in New England. This could be significantly stepped up both among the five colleges and among the twelve college group. In my group, for example, it might be said that the education of a Smith student would be enhanced by a year "abroad" living in the atmosphere of the large state university. Correspondingly, the education of a University student would be enhanced by spending a year at Mount Holyoke.

Today's undergraduates are very peripatetic beings. There seems to be more movement among institutions and transfers from one to another than in

times past. Should this trend continue, it is conceivable that a student would go to one institution for one kind of experience and simply transfer to another for another kind. It might be that facilitation of such movement would be one way of giving students in the single sex colleges exposure to other institutional climates. Obviously such movement can be more easily facilitated among cooperating institutions than those which do not work together.

Now most of the things I have talked about here and the many others I could mention cost money. So one must consider costs and benefits. If Smith, say, were to go coeducational by simply reducing the number of female applicants and admitting men, I take it the capital cost would be relatively small. Smith would have difficulty doing this, however, since it feels it has a continuing obligation to admit essentially the same number of women in the future as it has in the past. Hence, so far, the only proposal I have seen for coeducation at Smith involves the construction of additional dormitory facilities to add to the Smith female undergraduates, male undergraduates. In one plan the estimated capital cost is approximately 10 million dollars. If the sum were invested, it would yield about $500,000. Suppose one were to use that income and similar sums from Mount Holyoke and Amherst, and apply it to Five College Cooperation over a specified period of time to see what might be achieved. We would have a kitty of approximately 1 million dollars a year. $200,000 of this might go into 15 minute bus service which would greatly enhance the possibilities for the students mixing among themselves. The balance could go into such things as planning for joint course registrations, increasing residential exchanges, establishing five college student facilities, and so on.

My point here is that if we are talking about expanding an institution to permit coeducation, the amounts of money involved are very large indeed. With imagination, it might be possible to obtain almost the same result with much smaller sums.

Now these suggestions relate quite explicitly to the five institutions with which I deal. Not all of them are applicable to all cooperative arrangements. Mr. Briber will be talking about quite a different group of institutions and wll be offering different ideas. Nevertheless, it does seem to me that those of the single sex colleges which have some access to coeducational institutions or institutions predominantly of the opposite sex should very seriously consider ways in which they can approach satisfaction of the desire of their students and faculty for more of the elements of coeducation by working cooperatively than thay could by working alone.